UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1993/NGO/28
11 February 1993

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 12

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is distributed in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[4 February 1993]

HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES

The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights has repeatedly called for a more comprehensive integration of human rights laws and principles into the provision of refugee protection. The international community is increasingly recognizing that the relationship between human rights and refugees requires such integration, particularly as it begins to address the problem of refugee flows from the perspective of prevention. Human rights abuses are a major contributing cause of the displacement of populations, and the alleviation of those abuses must play a major role in any preventive strategy. Solutions and arrangements for reception in refugee situations also implicate human rights. What is often the most desirable solution - voluntary repatriation - will succeed only if the human rights abuses that caused the flight of refugees in the first place are eliminated.

In her statement to the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-eighth session, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees described the aspects of the relationship between human rights and refugees and suggested that the Commission include a new agenda item on refugees and displaced persons that would allow a more thorough and focused examination of violations of human rights and population displacements. Under this agenda item, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee envisaged presenting a report on the state of the world's refugees. She also suggested that the Commission request its Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups to focus to some extent on circumstances which create flows of refugees and displaced persons. Reports of these circumstances could be presented under the new agenda item, as well as specific country situations which produce flows of refugees or which prevent their return home.

The Lawyers Committee believes that the Commission's inclusion of such an agenda item would provide an effective means by which the Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Reufgees could support and complement each other's work. Such an agenda item would provide a means of drawing attention to human rights violations that lead to the flight of refugees and a focal point for the implementation of protective and preventive strategies. The Lawyers Committee therefore recommends that the Commission follow the recommendation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and include a new agenda item on refugees and displaced persons.

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